

HAMPTON VA

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Robin McCormick | rmccormick@hampton.gov | 757-728-3276
22 Lincoln Street | Hampton, VA 23669

Council: Move ahead on ideas for recreational facility at Armistead Pointe

Nov. 13, 2013 - Hampton City Council and the city Planning Commission endorsed moving forward with additional research on three potential athletic or recreational complexes after a presentation and discussion Wednesday morning.

Consultants – working with staff from the Planning and the Parks and Recreation departments and with input from the public - have been considering what kinds of facilities should be located at Armistead Pointe, which is already home to the Boo Williams Sportsplex.

Among other things, they have been looking at the economic potential of building an aquatics complex. Several residents and regional swimming groups brought that idea to the surface during last year's capital improvement planning input meetings.

Criteria for any new complex include:

- Community need - facilities needed for recreational use by city residents and by Hampton City School students
- Economic benefits - direct operating revenue as well as economic benefits and taxes to the city through hotel stays, restaurant meals and retail sales by out-of-town visitors.
- Cost - cost of constructing and operating the facility.

The three concepts that were selected for further study:

An expansion/companion facility to the Boo Williams Sportsplex: The presentation noted that the Boo Williams facility has “a proven ability to deliver upon events that create economic impact.” It is restricted in size of events, however, with eight basketball courts and limited track uses. The expansion would add four basketball courts and a 200-meter banked track, with additional seating and some upgrades.

Events at the Sportsplex this year will sell more than 60,000 tickets and add about \$2.8 million in hotel spending for the region -- 60 percent of which stays in Hampton. The facility could cost about \$13 million and generate an additional \$1million in economic benefit to the city annually.

A BMX park: The city already has a BMX (bicycle motocross) track at Gosnold's Hope Park, operated largely by one family and volunteers. Many local BMX riders are ranked in the state or nation. And like the Sportsplex, the BMX track has a proven record with 49 races a year and a nationally known operator.

The construction costs would be limited - about \$1 million - for a facility that has lights, restrooms, concessions, and more parking. But the economic benefits are also not as large - \$250,00 to \$500,000 annually. A site has not been identified, but the consultant recommended it be near other amenities.

An aquatics center. The city already plans to build a 25-meter pool to replace the aging one at Old Hampton Community Center, at a cost of roughly \$11 million. For an additional \$5 million to \$12 million, the project could be upgraded to include a 50-meter pool for local and regional competitions and a 25-meter warm-up/recreational/therapeutic pool.

At the upper end of the price range, a recreational water park with slides would expand the usage and revenues for the facility. Hampton City Schools has identified swim facilities as their top need for high school teams.

Other ideas explored so far have been rejected, including: a larger, nationally competitive aquatics facility (not likely to draw enough events); an outdoor field complex (not enough land available); and a new diamond field complex for baseball and softball (again, not enough land to draw major competitions), although an upgrade to Briarfield Park was recommended to improve current fields.

Different Council members spoke in support of various proposals.

City Manager Mary Bunting said further staff and consultant research will include looking at potential sites, exploring existing facilities elsewhere, studying cost recovery models and looking at potential public-private partnership.

Public comment on these and other major spending proposals will be the focus Thursday, Nov. 14, of the first public forum on the 2015-2019 Capital Improvement Plan.

The plan is a five-year schedule for maintenance of public property, master plan initiatives, neighborhood support, education, economic development and other major improvements. The forum starts at 6 p.m. at the West Hampton Community Center, 12638 Briarfield Road.

###